



Selectmen's Packet
September 13, 2011
Busa Land Use: Farming

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Support and Resources for a Community Farm

Busa Farm Land and Infrastructure

Custom Soil Resource Report for Busa Farm

Thanks to a joint effort of the United States Department of Agriculture and other Federal agencies, State agencies including the Agricultural Experiment Stations, a custom soil survey is available for the Busa Farm site. The complete 20-page report can be easily made available, but the primary takeaway of this report is the high quality of the soil type present on the Busa land: Hinckley loamy sand:

Appendix C: Soil Survey Summary

Busa Farm Soil Map



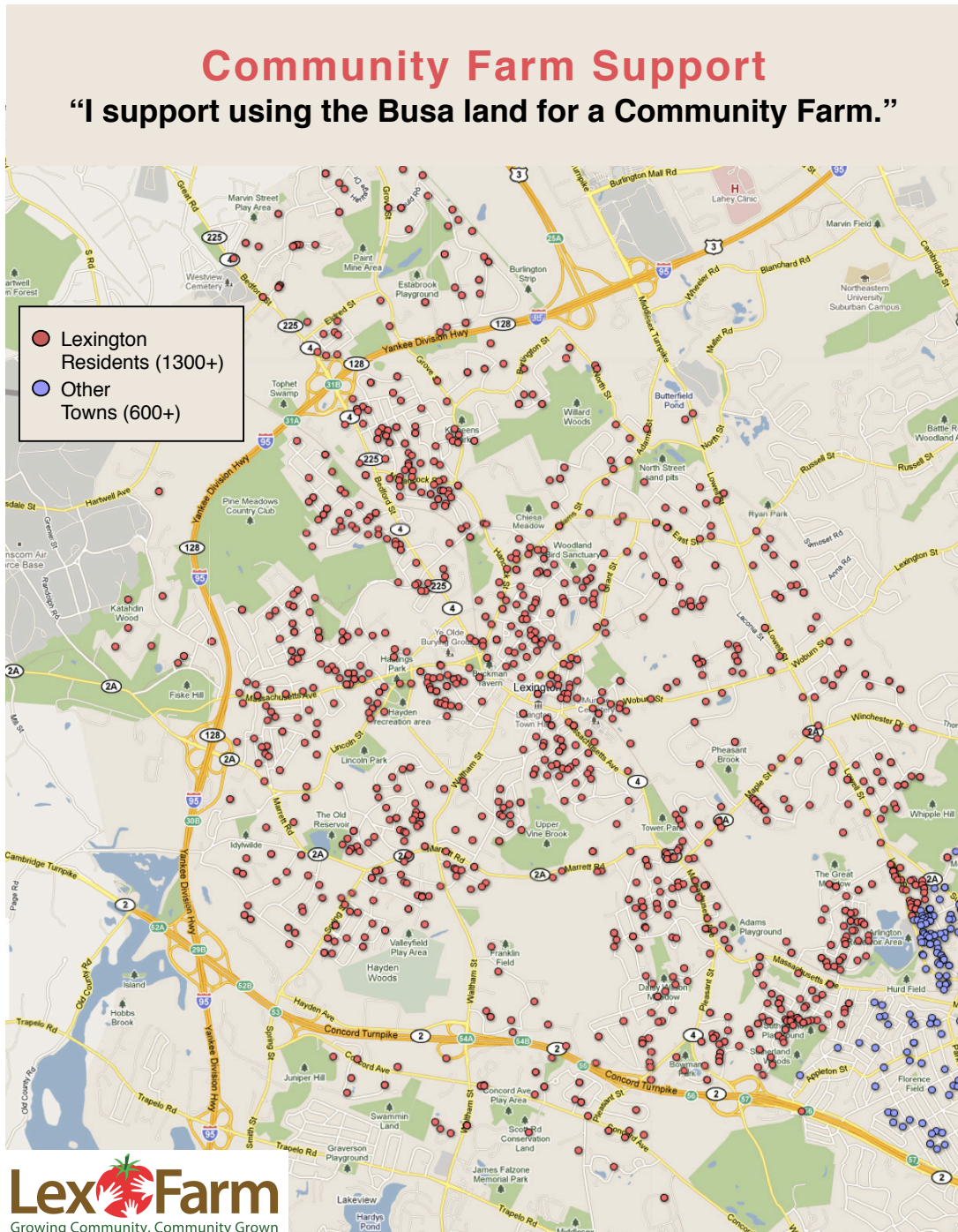
“HINCKLEY series consists of nearly level to very steep, deep (5+ ft.), excessively drained soils on glacial outwash plain, terraces, kames, and eskers. They formed in gravelly and cobbly coarse textured glacial outwash. Hinckley soils have friable or loose, gravelly and very gravelly sandy loam to loamy coarse sand surface soil and subsoil with rapid permeability, with loose stratified sands and gravels in the substratum at 12 to 30 inches which have very rapid permeability. Major limitations are related to slope and droughtiness.

Hinckley soils are of State and Local Importance as farmland. It fails to meet the requirements of prime farmland, but is of statewide importance for the production of

food, feed, fiber, or forage crops. This farmland can economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.”

Broad Support in Lexington and beyond

Petition signers



Regional Support and Resources

The following article is provided as a brief primer by the Union of Concerned Scientists' for those interested in further reading about Food and Agriculture Science impacts. See www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/ for more information. Highlighted areas below are particularly relevant for the consideration of the benefits of a community farm in Lexington:

Local and Regional Food Systems 101

Local and regional food systems are experiencing rapid growth in the U.S. With a little help from forward-looking public policy, they will continue growing, benefiting their customers, their local economies, and the nation's public health and environmental goals.

But what *are* they, exactly? Defining “local” is challenging, so here we focus on markets in which farmers sell food directly to a consumer or institution. We've put together a quick primer on some of the most common ways in which farmers sell their food directly to customers, bypassing mainstream, consolidated distribution and retailing systems.

Farmers Markets allow individual farmers and other vendors to market their products directly to consumers in a single location, giving shoppers their choice from a variety of fresh, local food. Frequently they occur in an outdoor public venue at specified times during the growing season. Farmers markets were once common in the U.S., but the rise of supermarkets and improvements in highway transportation led to their decline, and by 1970 there were just 340 farmers markets left in the country. In recent decades, farmers markets have made a dramatic comeback, and by 2011 their numbers had grown to over 7,000.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a system in which consumers buy a share of a farm's output at the beginning of the year and receive weekly installments of food throughout the growing season. This arrangement helps farmers by providing an infusion of cash early in the year and by allowing them to spend less time on marketing once the growing season begins. Benefits to consumers include the opportunity to support and interact with a local farmer and to receive fresh produce. According to one recent estimate, there are currently over 4,000 CSAs operating in the U.S.

Farm-to-School programs aim to improve the nutrition of school children by adding fresh, local food to cafeteria menus, to enrich their education through curriculum development and experiential learning opportunities, and to foster connections between local farms and communities. Similar models in other institutional markets—

such as hospitals, prisons, and military installations—are also attracting growing interest.

Food Hubs are distribution centers that provide a logistical and marketing interface between farmers and regional buyers. Farmers deliver their products to the food hub, which provides storage, processing, and packaging services and markets the food to wholesale buyers such as restaurants, hotels, and universities, as well as retail customers. These facilities make it easier for local and regional farmers to compete with the mainstream, consolidated food production and distribution system.

Roadside Stands have long been a familiar fixture along secondary roads in rural areas. They provide farmers with the most convenient marketing channel imaginable (the food never has to leave the premises), while attracting customers with the promise of maximum freshness.

U-Pick Operations, like roadside stands, rely on bringing the customer to the farm. They differ in allowing the customer to go into the fields or orchards to harvest the food themselves. For many customers, there is a strong appeal in the idea of getting their food directly from the field it was grown in.

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Area Community Farms and Small Farm Resources

Area Community Farms

Eastern Massachusetts boasts the largest concentration of community farms and CSA farms in the United States. We have contacted many of these farms for information over the last two years, and they all have shared their knowledge and time most generously. We are particularly grateful to farm managers and directors of the following farms, and they have extended offers to Lexington Town officials to contact them as well with questions:

Newton Community Farm

303 Nahanton Street, Newton, MA 02459

newtoncommunityfarm.org

Greg Maslowe, Farm Manager; newtoncommunityfarm@comcast.net

Peter Barrer, President, Board of Directors

Waltham Fields Community Farm

240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452

communityfarms.org

Amanda Cather, Farm Manager; amanda@communityfarms.org

Claire Kozower, Executive Director; claire@communityfarms.org

Higher Education and Certificate Programs

The area is rich with resources from area universities and specialized schools. Here is a sampling:

Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition and Science Policy

The ***Agriculture, Food and Environment (AFE) program*** within the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy fuses the disciplines of nutrition, agricultural science, environmental studies, and public policy. We offer M.S., Ph.D. and combined degree programs, diverse community service and internship placements, and ***opportunities to participate in research on sustainable agriculture, local food systems, and consumer behavior related to food and the environment.*** Students in the AFE degree program learn to evaluate the ecological, political, economic and social aspects of food production and distribution.

The University of Massachusetts recently approved a new 15-credit Certificate Program in Sustainable Food and Farming. This is available for college students, high school grads, and students with a GED. It is possible to complete this degree entirely online, mixed online and on campus, or entirely on campus.

The Farm School, Athol, MA

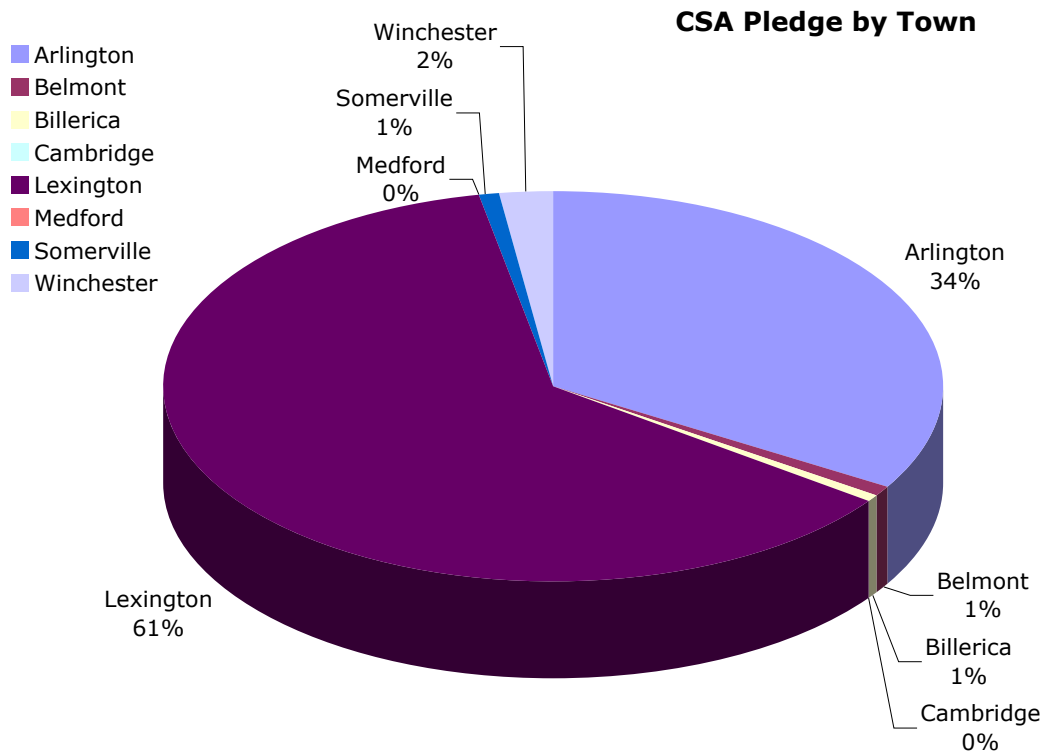
The Farm School provides multi-day residential school-year and summer programs for over 1,500 young people and their teachers, a year-long program to train adults in practical sustainable agriculture, and an on-site one-room middle school.

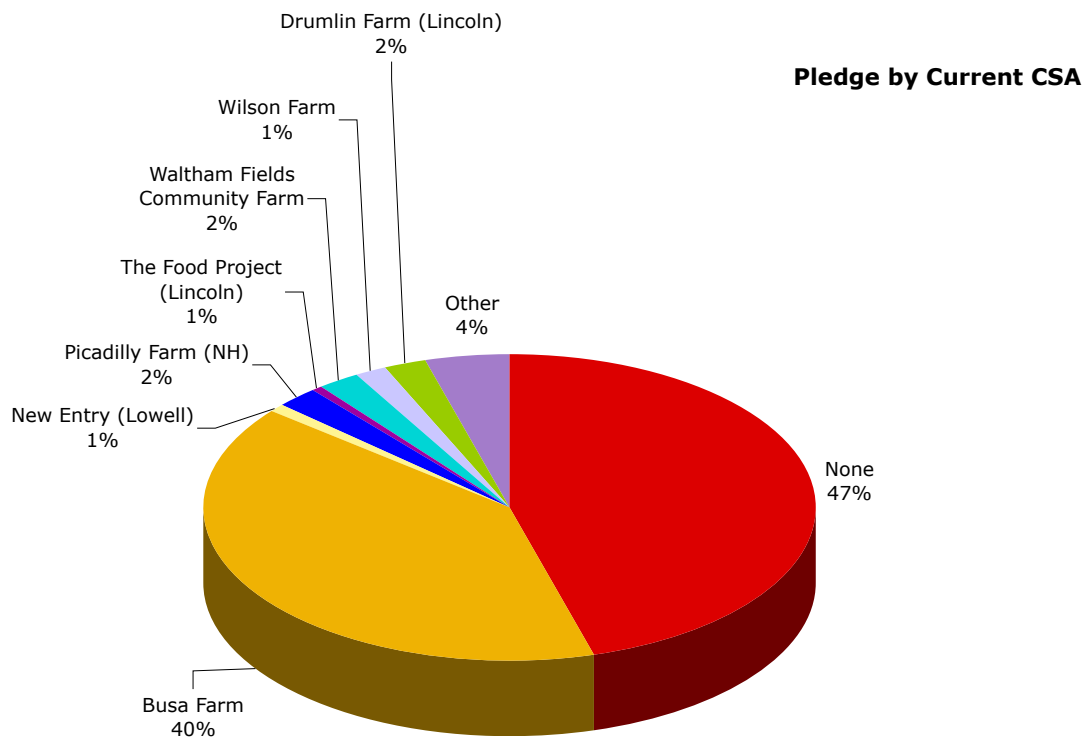
Young people work the land and take home the cultural history, vital experience, and personal identity that farms nurture. Teachers work alongside their students and leave with new insights into their craft and children they teach. Adults learn to farm and carry essential knowledge from one community to the next.

Financial Sustainability

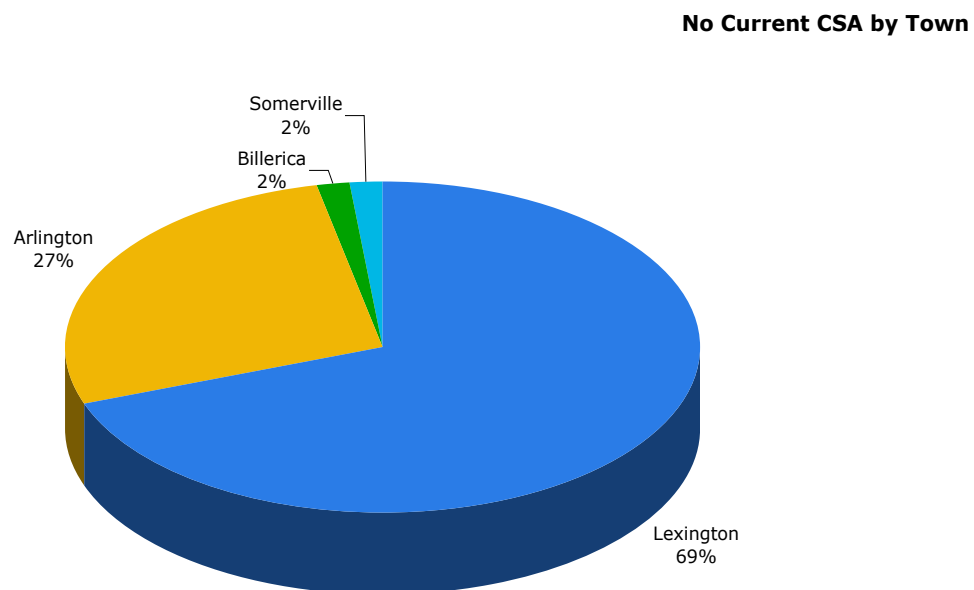
Demand for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Through our email list and web site, we asked whether people would seriously consider a CSA offered from a future Lexington Community Farm. We received 120 pledges:





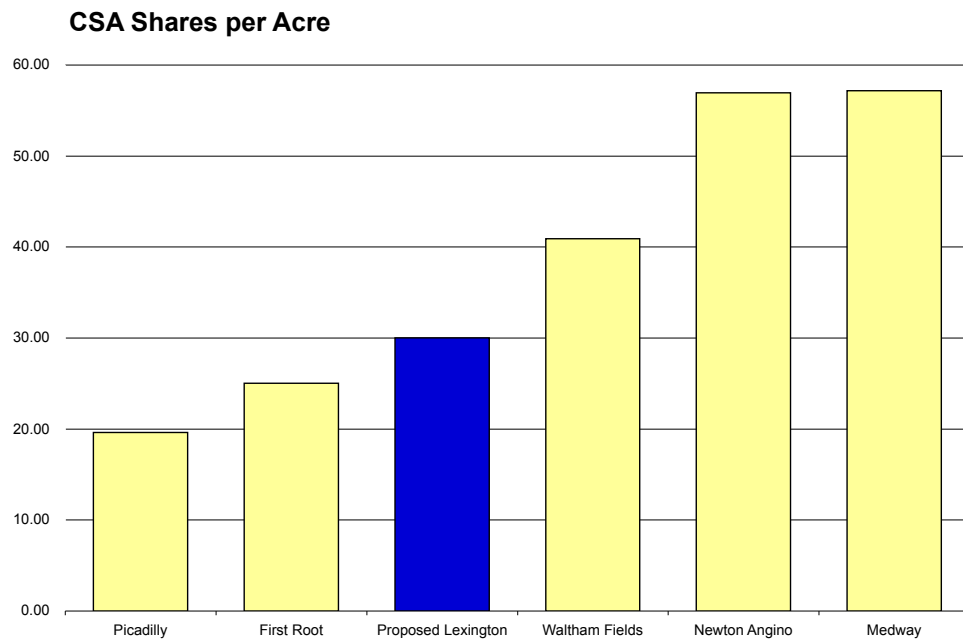
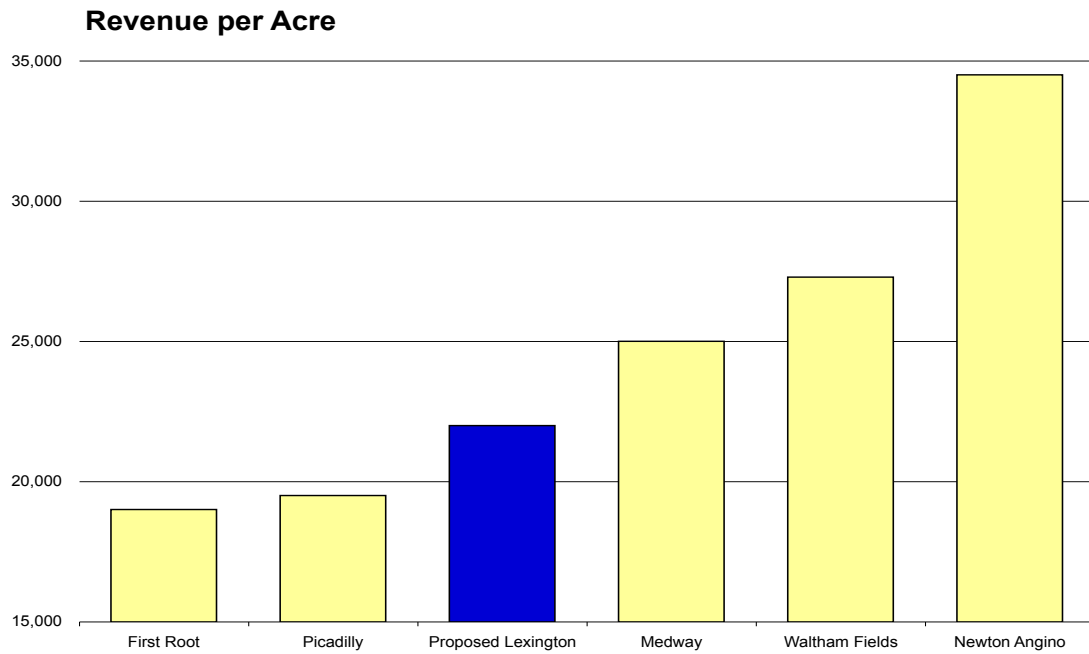
Towns of those who do not subscribe to any CSA currently:

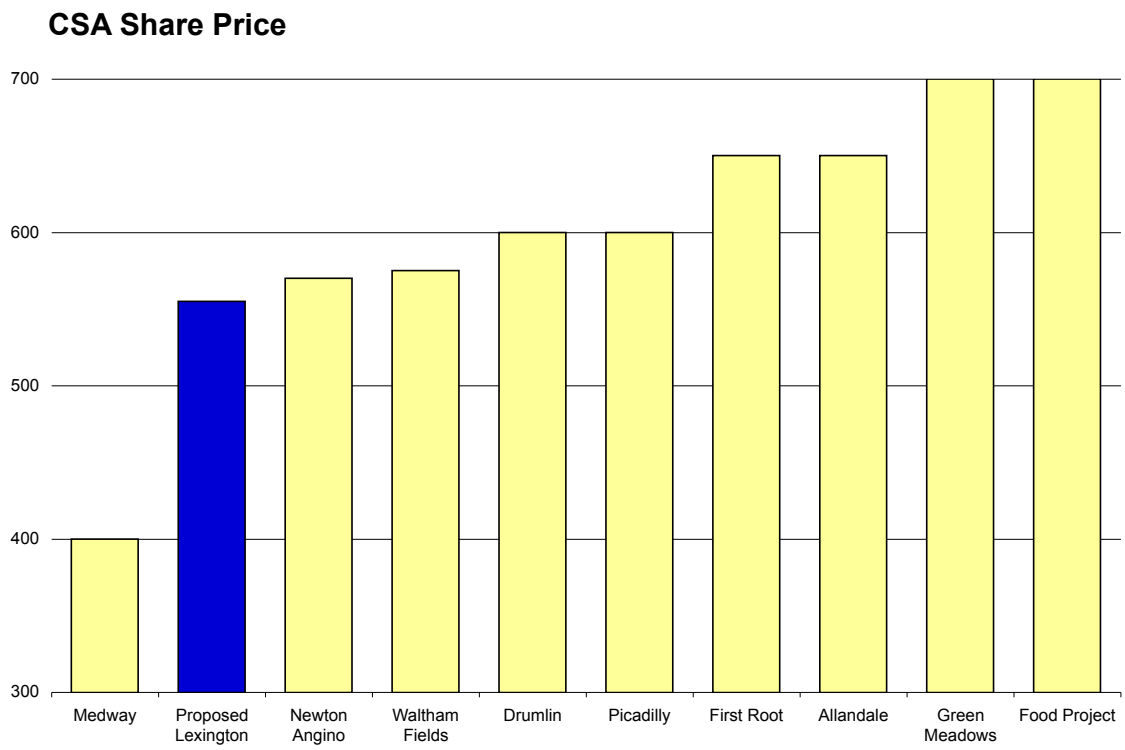


Summary of LexFarm Business Plan

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
FARMING						
	Income					
	CSA Shares	81,284	92,368	115,461	115,461	138,553
	Donated Food Value	(10,884)	(12,368)	(15,461)	(15,461)	(18,553)
	Direct Sales	31,600	41,636	51,045	53,045	63,455
	Expense					
	Payroll	58,400	59,400	74,200	76,800	78,200
	Produce Supplies	26,700	29,895	35,832	38,382	42,318
	Equip, Buildings & Rent	18,184	23,778	19,000	19,000	19,000
	Admin	11,800	13,000	14,200	15,400	16,600
Yearly Farming Surplus (Loss)		(13,084)	(4,438)	7,814	3,464	27,336
EDUCATION						
	Income	750	852	1,065	1,065	1,278
	Expense	0	10,000	20,000	20,500	21,000
Yearly Education Surplus (Loss)		750	(9,148)	(18,935)	(19,435)	(19,722)
OUTREACH						
	Income	32,500	27,227	19,545	23,807	33,182
	Expense	47,700	6,050	6,700	6,850	7,500
Yearly Outreach Surplus (Loss)		(15,200)	21,177	12,845	16,957	25,682
TOTAL						
	Income	135,250	149,716	171,656	177,918	217,915
	Expense	162,784	142,124	169,932	176,932	184,618
Yearly Total Surplus (Loss)		(27,534)	7,592	1,724	986	33,297
Cumulative Total Surplus		(27,534)	(19,942)	(18,218)	(17,232)	16,064

How Proposal fits with area CSA/Community Farms





Governance of a Community Farm

Public Farms on Town-owned Land

**Listing of community farms in nearby towns
and their associated town government body.**

Town	Community Farm	Town-owned Land?	Farm Operated By	Town Oversight/Support By
Lincoln	Codman Community Farms	yes	501(c)3 nonprofit organization	Agricultural Commission ¹
Lincoln	The Food Project	yes	501(c)3 nonprofit organization	Agricultural Commission, Conservation Commission ²
Concord	Gaining Ground	yes	501(c)3 nonprofit organization	Agriculture Committee ³
Weston	Land's Sake	yes	501(c)3 nonprofit organization	Agricultural Commission ⁴
Natick	Natick Community Organic Farm	yes	501(c)3 nonprofit organization	1976 – 2009 School Committee 2009 – present: Conservation Commission ⁵
Newton	Newton Community Farm	yes	501(c)3 nonprofit organization	Newton Angino Farm Commission ⁶

1. Lincoln Agricultural Commission Mission and Service Description

The purpose of the Agricultural Commission is to preserve, protect and promote agriculture in Lincoln: to provide leadership, technical guidance, vision, planning and coordination to help support, define, promote and enable new agricultural opportunities, stability and enhancement of ongoing operations as well as foster strong community and regional support that will work to create a sustainable agricultural community in Lincoln.

The Commission will also seek further protections for existing agricultural lands, the identification of new lands for agricultural use, both public and private, and work to assist in natural resource management that is consistent with sustainable agricultural practices.

Service Description: The work of the Commission is to pursue all initiatives appropriate to the mission. This would include working closely with all town boards and commissions (Planning, Conservation, Zoning, Board of Health, Historical Commission, Assessors, etc.), promoting agriculture to the town, and with regional and state agencies to ensure that all initiatives are consistent with promoting a sustainable agricultural community.

2. Lincoln Conservation Commission

The Food Project Lincoln Farm is currently operated on thirty-one acres of conservation land approximately 15 miles outside of Boston, in the town of Lincoln, Massachusetts. Twenty-seven acres of this are available for vegetable production and the remaining four acres include a composting area, greenhouse, tractor storage area, irrigation pond, and our CSA distribution area. Operation of this site is made possible through a continuing partnership with the Town of Lincoln's Conservation Commission and resident support.

3. Concord Agriculture Committee Purpose

The purpose of the Committee is to provide a forum for the discussion of interest and concern to farmers in Concord and to advise the Board of Selectmen concerning how the town can help to support farming in Concord.

Note: Gaining Ground operates on the Thoreau Birthplace Property, owned by a public trust.

4. Weston Agricultural Commission

The Commission shall administer the Town's Farm Preservation Bylaw. Additional activities of the Commission will include but are not limited to the following: encouraging the continued pursuit of agriculture in Weston; promoting agricultural-based economic opportunities in Town; mediating, advocating, educating and/or negotiating on farming issues; working for preservation of prime agricultural lands; and pursuing all initiatives appropriate to retaining farming in Weston.

5. Natick School Committee / Conservation Commission

The Town of Natick purchased the land in the 1960s. It was put under the auspices of the School Committee in anticipation of its development into a school.

The modern-day farm community concept was conceived by the Eliot Church, the Lions Club, and Natick's Youth and Human Resources Committee as a means of supplying much-needed summer jobs to local young people at risk.

In 1976, the Town of Natick's School Committee agreed to lend land to the Red Wing Farm project. The project became known as The Natick Community Farm, a 501 [c] 3 organization and took on its current ambitious environmental and education mission.

On April 14, 2009, Passage of Article 3 at the Town Meeting ensured that 27 acres on which Natick Community Organic Farm sits was secured in perpetuity as conservation land. The land was put under the auspices of the Town of Natick's Conservation Commission.

6. Newton Angino Farm Commission

In 2005 the Community Preservation Committee and Board of Aldermen voted to acquire the last working farm in Newton for use as a community-supported agriculture farm. This included restriction on the use of 1.5 acres for open space and active farming, preservation and rehabilitation of the historic farmhouse as affordable housing for the farm manager. In 2010 additional funding was approved to preserve and rehabilitate the historic barn to support farm operations and programs.

The City of Newton oversees the farm in conjunction with the Newton Farm Commission.

Newton's Farm Commission

Might be a good model for Lexington: Commission is focused only on community farm, not other agriculture enterprises. See attached document that describes establishing the Newton Angino Farm Commission

RFP results in License to Operate Farm

Following the model of Newton, a Lexington Farm Commission could issue an RFP according to priorities set by Town; this would result in the organization with the best proposal being granted a license to operate the community farm, with oversight by the commission. See attachment for first page of license agreement. Entire document available if interested.

LexFarm's Mission for Education

Mission Statement

The Lexington Community Farm Coalition is dedicated to education about farms, farming and sustainable land use.

Activities in Support of our Mission

The Lexington Community Farm Coalition is committed to providing information and educational and volunteer opportunities for anyone in Lexington interested in farms and farming. Here is how we've begun to accomplish our mission as we await the decision about whether there will be a community farm in Lexington:

"Weekly Update" email Newsletter

See samples attached of our email newsletter that provides our subscribers with information about area events and topics related to local food and farming.

Farm Tours

In the summers of 2010 and 2011, LexFarm sponsored seven farm tours of area community farms for both adults and children. At Waltham Fields Community Farm in July, 2011, about 20 children aged 3 - 11 and their parents were organized by LexFarm for a tour and hands-on farm education.

Workshops

LexFarm has invited instructors to come to Lexington to teach various workshops about home gardening, and farming for a modest fee paid to the instructor.

Community Farming/Volunteering

LexFarm has organized several well-attended workdays at Busa Farm to help with weeding, harvesting and staking tomatoes. These workdays are instructional in nature, with demonstrations about effective farming and gardening techniques that teach new skills while assisting the farm in some way. LexFarm estimates that in its first year, volunteers could be organized at a community farm to provide at least 1600 hours of time on the farm

Scholarships to NOFA Summer Conference

In 2011, thanks to membership contributions and donations, LexFarm was able to offer two scholarships that paid conference fees to the Northeast Organic Farming Association Summer Conference in August. An excerpt from one of the recipients' trip report is provided below:

“When the second week in August rolls around, my thoughts typically turn to the NOFA Summer Conference. This year, as a result of a most generous scholarship funded by The Lexington Community Farm Coalition, I was able to attend the full three days of the conference.

Four of us piled into a small car and were on our way to UMass in Amherst, the location of the Summer Conference. On arrival we were handed a bound book of over 160 pages of general information about the lectures, workshops, animal power field days, films, the summer country fair, a silent auction, conference entertainment, exhibitors, presenters, and keynote speakers.

Needless to say, the problem became how to choose from all of this interesting and useful information. Some smart folks brought tape recorders to record one speaker while sitting down and listening to another!

My first selection was “Growing Salad Greens All Year.” This was taught by Lynda Simkins, a farmer of over 30 years. She spoke about winter growing inside several greenhouses at the Natick Community Farm. She shared one of her mottos, “There should be no naked soil.”

The next class was “How to Start a CSA,” taught by Carolyn Llewellyn of Sun Valley Farm in Mahwah, New Jersey. She covered twenty different topics, emphasizing the need to be highly organized, to be prepared for all sorts of unexpected problems, and to enjoy people and have patience for them. Llewellyn emphasized that starting a CSA is not for beginner farmers. You should have every intention of staying with your business for many years and being a treasured part of the community.” - *Lauren Yaffee, Meadow Mist Farm, Lexington*

You can read Lauren’s complete report at www.lexfarm.org .